# RENFREWSHIRE
# COUNTY LIBRARY.

## HINTS TO READERS.

Readers are requested to take great care of the Books while in their possession, and to point out any defect they may notice in them to the local Librarian.

Do not mark the Books by pen or pencil or in any other way. Keep them out of the hands of those who can not or will not handle them properly.

All Books should be returned within fourteen days from date of issue, but an extension of the period of loan may be granted if required.

*No.* Yeato 2 P

yeats 2 P.

2 085460 21

822.91
YEATS:

RENFREW DISTRICT LIBRARIES

RESERVE Branch

This book is to be returned on or before
the last date above. It may be borrowed
for a further period if not in demand.

THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE
THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN

# BENN'S ESSEX LIBRARY

*Edited by Edward G. Hawke, M.A. (Oxon.)*

*Published by Ernest Benn Limited,*

*Bouverie House, Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4*

*F'cap. 8vo. Cloth, gilt back, 3s. 6d. each net.*

## LIST OF TITLES

(*already published*)

EVELYN INNES

*By* GEORGE MOORE

CLIMBS ON ALPINE PEAKS

*By* HIS HOLINESS POPE PIUS XI

THE ROVER

*By* JOSEPH CONRAD

BLOOD AND SAND

*By* VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ

FUNDAMENTAL THOUGHTS IN ECONOMICS

*By* GUSTAV CASSEL

THE RAIDERS

*By* S. R. CROCKETT

RHYMES OF A ROLLING STONE

*By* ROBERT W. SERVICE

EVE'S RANSOM

*By* GEORGE GISSING

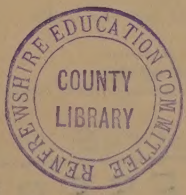
*For further titles see end of book.*

BENN'S ESSEX LIBRARY
*Edited by Edward G. Hawke, M.A.*

# W. B. YEATS

## THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

## THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN




LONDON: ERNEST BENN LTD.
*Bouverie House, Fleet Street.*

20,090

822.91
YEATS:

... ... ... ... ... 1892
...on (in "Poems" by W. B. Yeats) 1895
...n (in "Poems" by W. B. Yeats) ... 1899
...on (in "Poems" by W. B. Yeats) 1901
... (in "Poems" by W. B. Yeats) ... 1904
... (in "Poems" by W. B. Yeats) ... 1908
...tion (Revised) ... ... ... 1912
*Eighth Impression (in "Poems" by W. B. Yeats)* ... ... ... ... 1912
*Ninth Impression* ... ... ... ... 1913
*Tenth Impression* ... ... ... ... 1916
*Eleventh Impression* ... ... ... ... 1919
*Twelfth Impression (in "Poems" by W. B. Yeats)* ... ... ... ... 1920
*Thirteenth Impression (in "Poems" by W. B. Yeats)* ... ... ... ... 1922
*Fourteenth Impression* ... ... ... ... 1922
*Fifteenth Impression* ... ... ... ... 1923
*Sixteenth Impression (in "Poems" by W. B. Yeats)* ... ... ... ... 1924
*Seventeenth Impression*... ... ... ... 1924
*Eighteenth Impression* ... ... ... ... 1924
*Nineteenth Impression* ... ... ... ... 1924
*Twentieth Impression* ... ... ... ... 1924
*Twenty-first Impression* ... ... ... 1924
*Twenty-second Impression (Revised) (Cabinet Library)* ... ... ... ... ... 1925
*Twenty-third Impression* ... ... ... 1925
*Twenty-fourth Impression* ... ... ... 1929
*Twenty-fifth Impression (Essex Library)* ... 1929

20854621
RESERVE

*Amateurs wishing to perform these plays should communicate with Samuel French Limited, 26, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.*

To

FLORENCE FARR

*O Rose, thou art sick.*

WILLIAM BLAKE.

# THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

MAURTEEN BRUIN

BRIDGET BRUIN

SHAWN BRUIN

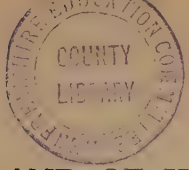
MARY BRUIN

FATHER HART

A FAERY CHILD

*The Scene is laid in the Barony of Kilmacowen, in the County of Sligo, and at a remote time.*

NOTE.—The passages enclosed in square brackets are those left out when the play is performed at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin.




# THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

SCENE.—*A room with a hearth on the floor in the middle of a deep alcove to the Right. There are benches in the alcove and a table; and a crucifix on the wall. The alcove is full of a glow of light from the fire. There is an open door facing the audience to the Left, and to the left of this a bench. Through the door one can see the forest. It is night, but the moon or a late sunset glimmers through the trees and carries the eye far off into a vague, mysterious world.* MAURTEEN BRUIN, SHAWN BRUIN, *and* BRIDGET BRUIN *sit in the alcove at the table or about the fire. They are dressed in the costume of some remote time, and near them sits an old priest,* FATHER HART. *He may be dressed as a friar. There is food and drink upon the table.* MARY BRUIN *stands by the door reading a book. If she looks up she can see through the door into the wood.*

BRIDGET

Because I bid her clean the pots for supper
She took that old book down out of the thatch
She has been doubled over it ever since.
We should be deafened by her groans and moans.
Had she to work as some do, Father Hart;
Get up at dawn like me and mend and scour

Or ride abroad in the boisterous night like you,
The pyx and blessed bread under your arm.

SHAWN

Mother, you are too cross.

BRIDGET

You've married her,
And fear to vex her and so take her part.

MAURTEEN (*to* FATHER HART)

It is but right that youth should side with youth;
She quarrels with my wife a bit at times,
And is too deep just now in the old book!
But do not blame her greatly; [she will grow
As quiet as a puff-ball in a tree
When but the moons of marriage dawn and die
For half a score of times].

FATHER HART

Their hearts are wild,
As be the hearts of birds, till children come.

BRIDGET

She would not mind the kettle, milk the cow,
Or even lay the knives and spread the cloth.

SHAWN

Mother, if only——

MAURTEEN

Shawn, this is half empty;
Go, bring up the best bottle that we have.

FATHER HART

I *never* saw her read a book before,
What can it be?

MAURTEEN (*to* SHAWN)

What are you waiting for?
You must not shake it when you draw the cork;
It's precious wine, so take your time about it.
(*To Priest.*) (SHAWN *goes.*)
[There was a Spaniard wrecked at Ocris Head,
When I was young, and I have still some bottles.]
He cannot bear to hear her blamed; the book
Has lain up in the thatch these fifty years;
My father told me my grandfather wrote it,
And killed a heifer for the binding of it—
[But supper's spread, and we can talk and eat]
It was little good he got out of the book,

Because it filled his house with rambling fiddlers,
And rambling ballad-makers and the like.
[The griddle-bread is there in front of you.]
Colleen, what is the wonder in that book,
That you must leave the bread to cool? Had I
Or had my father read or written books
There were no stocking stuffed with yellow guineas
To come when I am dead to Shawn and you.

FATHER HART

You should not fill your head with foolish dreams.
What are you reading?

MARY

How a Princess Edane,
A daughter of a King of Ireland, heard
A voice singing on a May Eve like this,
And followed half awake and half asleep,
Until she came into the Land of Faery,
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue.
And she is still there, busied with a dance
Deep in the dewy shadow of a wood,
[Or where stars walk upon a mountain-top].

MAURTEEN

Persuade the colleen to put down the book;
My grandfather would mutter just such things,
And he was no judge of a dog or a horse,
And any idle boy could blarney him;
Just speak your mind.

FATHER HART

Put it away, my colleen;
[God spreads the heavens above us like great wings
And gives a little round of deeds and days,
And then come the wrecked angels and set snares,
And bait them with light hopes and heavy dreams,
Until the heart is puffed with pride and goes
Half shuddering and half joyous from God's peace],
For it was some wrecked angel, blind with tears,
Who flattered Edane's heart with merry words.
My colleen, I have seen some other girls
Restless and ill at ease, but years went by
And they grew like their neighbours and were glad
In minding children, working at the churn,
And gossiping of weddings and of wakes;
[For life moves out of a red flare of dreams
Into a common light of common hours,
Until old age bring the red flare again].

MAURTEEN

That's true—but she's too young to know it's true.

BRIDGET

She's old enough to know that it is wrong
To mope and idle.

MAURTEEN

I've little blame for her;
She's dull when my big son is in the fields,
And that and maybe this good woman's tongue
Have driven her to hide among her dreams
Like children from the dark under the bed-clothes.

BRIDGET

She'd never do a turn if I were silent.

MAURTEEN

And maybe it is natural upon May Eve
To dream of the good people. But tell me, girl,
If you've the branch of blessed quicken wood
That women hang upon the post of the door
That they may send good luck into the house?
Remember they may steal new-married brides

After the fall of twilight on May Eve,
Or what old women mutter at the fire
Is but a pack of lies.

FATHER HART

It may be truth.
We do not know the limit of those powers
God has permitted to the evil spirits
For some mysterious end. You have done right (*to* MARY);
It's well to keep old innocent customs up.

(MARY BRUIN *has taken a bough of quicken wood from a seat and hung it on a nail in the door-post. A girl child strangely dressed, perhaps in faery green, comes out of the wood and takes it away.*)

MARY

I had no sooner hung it on the nail
Before a child ran up out of the wind;
She has caught it in her hand and fondled it;
[Her face is pale as water before dawn].

FATHER HART

Whose child can this be?

MAURTEEN

No one's child at all.
She often dreams that some one has gone by,
When there was nothing but a puff of wind.

MARY

They have taken away the blessed quicken wood,
They will not bring good luck into the house;
Yet I am glad that I was courteous to them,
For are not they, likewise, children of God?

FATHER HART

Colleen, they are the children of the fiend,
And they have power until the end of Time,
When God shall fight with them a great pitched battle
And hack them into pieces.

MARY

He will smile,
Father, perhaps, and open His great door.

FATHER HART

Did but the lawless angels see that door

They would fall, slain by everlasting peace;
And when such angels knock upon our doors,
Who goes with them must drive through the same storm.

(*A thin old arm comes round the door-post and knocks and beckons. It is clearly seen in the silvery light.* MARY BRUIN *goes to door and stands in it for a moment.* MAURTEEN BRUIN *is busy filling* FATHER HART'S *plate.* BRIDGET BRUIN *stirs the fire.*)

MARY (*coming to table*)

There's somebody out there that beckons me
And raised her hand as though it held a cup,
And she was drinking from it, so it may be
That she is thirsty.

(*She takes milk from the table and carries it to the door.*)

FATHER HART

That will be the child
That you would have it was no child at all.

BRIDGET

[And maybe, Father, what he said was true;

For there is not another night in the year
So wicked as to-night.

MAURTEEN

Nothing can harm us
While the good Father's underneath our roof.

MARY

A little queer old woman dressed in green.

BRIDGET

The good people beg for milk and fire
Upon May Eve—woe to the house that gives,
For they have power upon it for a year.

MAURTEEN

Hush, woman, hush!

BRIDGET

She's given milk away.
I knew she would bring evil on the house

MAURTEEN

Who was it?

MARY

Both the tongue and face were strange.

MAURTEEN

Some strangers came last week to Clover Hill;
She must be one of them.]

BRIDGET

I am afraid!

FATHER HART

The Cross will keep all evil from the house
While it hangs there.

MAURTEEN

Come, sit beside me, colleen,
And put away your dreams of discontent,
For I would have you light up my last days,
Like the good glow of the turf; and when I die
You'll be the wealthiest hereabout, for, colleen,
I have a stocking full of yellow guineas
Hidden away where nobody can find it.

BRIDGET

You are the fool of every pretty face,
And I must spare and pinch that my son's wife
May have all kinds of ribbons for her head.

MAURTEEN

Do not be cross; she is a right good girl!
[The butter is by your elbow, Father Hart.
My colleen, have not Fate and Time and Change
Done well for me and for old Bridget there?]
We have a hundred acres of good land,
And sit beside each other at the fire.
I have this reverend Father for my friend,
I look upon your face and my son's face—
We've put his plate by yours—and here he comes,
And brings with him the only thing we have lacked,
Abundance of good wine. (SHAWN *comes in.*) Stir up the fire,
And put new turf upon it till it blaze;
To watch the turf-smoke coiling from the fire,
And feel content and wisdom in your heart,
This is the best of life; [when we are young
We long to tread a way none trod before,

But find the excellent old way through love,
And through the care of children, to the hour
For bidding Fate and Time and Change goodbye.]

(MARY *stands for a moment in the door, and takes a sod of turf from the fire and goes out through the door.* SHAWN *follows her and meets her coming in.*)

SHAWN

What is it draws you to the chill o' the wood?
There is a light among the stems of the trees
That makes one shiver.

MARY

[A little queer old man
Made me a sign to show he wanted fire
To light his pipe.]

BRIDGET

You've given milk and fire
Upon the unluckiest night of the year and brought,
For all you know, evil upon the house.
Before you married you were idle and fine
And went about with ribbons on your head;
And now—no, Father, I will speak my mind—
She is not a fitting wife for any man——

SHAWN

Be quiet, Mother!

MAURTEEN

You are much too cross.

MARY

What do I care if I have given this house,
Where I must hear all day a bitter tongue,
Into the power of faeries!

BRIDGET

You know well
How calling the good people by that name,
Or talking of them over much at all,
May bring all kinds of evil on the house.

MARY

Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!
Let me have all the freedom I have lost;
Work when I will and idle when I will!
Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,
For I would ride with you upon the wind.
[Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,]
And dance upon the mountains like a flame.

FATHER HART

You cannot know the meaning of your words.

MARY

Father, I am right weary of four tongues:
A tongue that is too crafty and too wise,
A tongue that is too godly and too grave,
A tongue that is more bitter than the tide,
And a kind tongue too full of drowsy love,
Of drowsy love and my captivity.

(SHAWN BRUIN *leads her to a seat at the left of the door.*)

SHAWN

Do not blame me; I often lie awake
Thinking that all things trouble your bright head.
How beautiful it is—your broad pale forehead
Under a cloudy blossoming of hair!
Sit down beside me here—these are too old,
And have forgotten they were ever young.

MARY

O, you are the great door-post of this house,
And I the branch of blessed quicken wood,

And if I could I'd hang upon the post,
Till I had brought good luck into the house.

(*She would put her arms about him, but looks shyly at the priest and lets her arms fall.*)

FATHER HART

My daughter, take his hand—by love alone
God binds us to Himself and to the hearth,
That shuts us from the waste beyond His peace,
From maddening freedom and bewildering light.

SHAWN

Would that the world were mine to give it you,
And not its quiet hearths alone, but even
All that bewilderment of light and freedom,
If you would have it.

MARY

I would take the world
And break it into pieces in my hands
To see you smile watching it crumble away.

SHAWN

Then I would mould a world of fire and dew,
With no one bitter, grave or over wise,

And nothing marred or old to do you wrong,
And crowd the enraptured quiet of the sky
With candles burning to your lonely face.

MARY

Your looks are all the candles that I need.

SHAWN

Once a fly dancing in a beam of the sun,
Or the light wind blowing out of the dawn,
Could fill your heart with dreams none other knew,
But now the indissoluble sacrament
Has mixed your heart that was most proud and cold
With my warm heart for ever; the sun and moon
Must fade and heaven be rolled up like a scroll;
But your white spirit still walks by my spirit.

(*A voice singing in the wood.*)

MAURTEEN

There's some one singing. Why, it's but a child.
It sang, "The lonely of heart is withered away."
A strange song for a child, but she sings sweetly.
Listen, listen!

(*Goes to door.*)

MARY

O, cling close to me,
Because I have said wicked things to-night.

THE VOICE

The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away
While the faeries dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,
"When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung
The lonely of heart is withered away!"

MAURTEEN

Being happy, I would have all others happy,
So I will bring her in out of the cold.

(*He brings in the faery child.*)

THE CHILD

I tire of winds and waters and pale lights.

MAURTEEN

And that's no wonder, for when night has fallen]
The wood's a cold and a bewildering place,
But you are welcome here.

THE CHILD

I am welcome here.
[For when I tire of this warm little house]
There is one here that must away, away.

MAURTEEN

O, listen to her dreamy and strange talk.
Are you not cold?

THE CHILD

I will crouch down beside you,
For I have run a long, long way this night.

BRIDGET

You have a comely shape.

MAURTEEN

Your hair is wet.

BRIDGET

I'll warm your chilly feet.

MAURTEEN

You have come indeed
A long, long way—for I have never seen
Your pretty face—and must be tired and hungry,
Here is some bread and wine.

THE CHILD

The wine is bitter.
Old mother, have you no sweet food for me?

BRIDGET

I have some honey.

(*She goes into the next room.*)

MAURTEEN

You have coaxing ways,
The mother was quite cross before you came.

(BRIDGET *returns with the honey and fills a porringer with milk.*)

BRIDGET

She is the child of gentle people; look
At her white hands and at her pretty dress.

I've brought you some new milk, but wait a while
And I will put it to the fire to warm,
For things well fitted for poor folk like us
Would never please a high-born child like you.

THE CHILD

From dawn, when you must blow the fire ablaze,
You work your fingers to the bone, old mother.
The young may lie in bed and dream and hope,
But you must work your fingers to the bone
Because your heart is old.

BRIDGET

The young are idle.

THE CHILD

Your memories have made you wise, old father;
The young must sigh through many a dream and hope,
But you are wise because your heart is old.

(BRIDGET *gives her more bread and honey*.)

MAURTEEN

O, who would think to find so young a girl
Loving old age and wisdom?

THE CHILD

No more, mother.

MAURTEEN

What a small bite! The milk is ready now. (*Hands it to her.*) What a small sip!

THE CHILD

Put on my shoes, old mother,
For I would like to dance now I have eaten.
The reeds are dancing by Coolaney lake,
And I would like to dance until the reeds
And the white waves have danced themselves asleep.

(BRIDGET *puts on the shoes, and the* CHILD *is about to dance, but suddenly sees the crucifix and shrieks and covers her eyes.*)

What is that ugly thing on the black cross?

FATHER HART

You cannot know how naughty your words are;
That is our Blessed Lord.

THE CHILD

Hide it away!

BRIDGET

I have begun to be afraid again.

THE CHILD

Hide it away!

MAURTEEN

That would be wickedness!

BRIDGET

That would be sacrilege!

THE CHILD

The tortured thing!
Hide it away!

MAURTEEN

Her parents are to blame.

FATHER HART

That is the image of the Son of God.

THE CHILD (*caressing him*)

Hide it away, hide it away!

MAURTEEN

No, no.

FATHER HART

Because you are so young and like a bird,
That must take fright at every stir of the leaves,
I will go take it down.

THE CHILD

Hide it away!
And cover it out of sight and out of mind!

(FATHER HART *takes crucifix from wall and carries it towards inner room.*)

FATHER HART

Since you have come into this barony,
I will instruct you in our blessed faith;
And being so keen of wit you'll soon learn.
(*To the others.*)
We must be tender to all budding things,
Our Maker let no thought of Calvary
Trouble the morning stars in their first song.
(*Puts crucifix in inner room.*)

THE CHILD

Here is level ground for dancing; I will dance.

(*Sings.*)

"The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away."

(*She dances.*)

MARY (*to* SHAWN)

Just now when she came near I thought I heard
Other small steps beating upon the floor,
And a faint music blowing in the wind,
Invisible pipes giving her feet the tune.

SHAWN

I heard no steps but hers.

MARY

I hear them now,
The unholy powers are dancing in the house.

MAURTEEN

Come over here, and if you promise me
Not to talk wickedly of holy things
I will give you something.

THE CHILD

Bring it me, old father.

MAURTEEN

Here are some ribbons that I bought in the town
For my son's wife—but she will let me give them
To tie up that wild hair the winds have tumbled.

THE CHILD

Come, tell me, do you love me?

MAURTEEN

Yes, I love you.

THE CHILD

Ah, but you love this fireside. Do you love me?

FATHER HART

When the Almighty puts so great a share
Of His own ageless youth into a creature,
To look is but to love.

THE CHILD

But you love Him?

BRIDGET

She is blaspheming.

THE CHILD

And do you love me too?

MARY

I do not know.

THE CHILD

You love that young man there,
Yet I could make you ride upon the winds,
[Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,]
And dance upon the mountains like a flame.

MARY

Queen of Angels and kind saints defend us!
Some dreadful thing will happen. A while ago
She took away the blessed quicken wood.

FATHER HART

You fear because of her unmeasured prattle;
She knows no better. Child, how old are you?

THE CHILD

When winter sleep's abroad my hair grows thin,
My feet unsteady. When the leaves awaken
My mother carries me in her golden arms;
I'll soon put on my womanhood and marry
The spirits of wood and water, but who can tell
When I was born for the first time? I think
I am much older than the eagle cock
[That blinks and blinks on Ballygawley Hill,]
And he is the oldest thing under the moon.

FATHER HART

O she is of the faery people.

THE CHILD

One called,
I sent my messengers for milk and fire,
She called again and after that I came.

(*All except* SHAWN *and* MARY BRUIN *gather behind the priest for protection.*)

SHAWN (*rising*)

Though you have made all these obedient,
You have not charmed my sight and won from me

A wish or gift to make you powerful;
I'll turn you from the house.

FATHER HART

No, I will face her.

THE CHILD

Because you took away the crucifix
I am so mighty that there's none can pass,
Unless I will it, where my feet have danced
Or where I've whirled my finger-tops.
(SHAWN *tries to approach her and cannot.*)

MAURTEEN

Look, look!
There something stops him—look how he moves his hands
As though he rubbed them on a wall of glass!

FATHER HART

I will confront this mighty spirit alone;
Be not afraid, the Father is with us,
[The Holy martyrs and the Innocents,
The adoring Magi in their coats of mail,]

And He who died and rose on the third day,
[And all the nine angelic hierarchies].

(*The* CHILD *kneels upon the settle beside* MARY *and puts her arms about her.*)

Cry, daughter, to the Angels and the Saints.

THE CHILD

You shall go with me, newly-married bride,
And gaze upon a merrier multitude.
[White-armed Nuala, Aengus of the Birds,
Feacra of the hurtling foam, and him
Who is the ruler of the Western Host,
Finvarra, and their Land of Heart's Desire,]
Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,
But joy is wisdom, Time an endless song.
I kiss you and the world begins to fade.

SHAWN

Awake out of that trance—and cover up
Your eyes and ears.

FATHER HART

She must both look and listen
For only the soul's choice can save her now.

Come over to me, daughter; stand beside me;
Think of this house and of your duties in it.

THE CHILD

Stay and come with me, newly-married bride,
For if you hear him you grow like the rest;
Bear children, cook, and bend above the churn,
And wrangle over butter, fowl, and eggs,
Until at last, grown old and bitter of tongue,
You're crouching there and shivering at the grave.

FATHER HART

Daughter, I point you out the way to Heaven.

THE CHILD

But I can lead you, newly-married bride,
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue,
And where kind tongues bring no captivity;
For we are but obedient to the thoughts
That drift into the mind at a wink of the eye.

FATHER HART

By the dear Name of the One crucified,
I bid you, Mary Bruin, come to me.

THE CHILD

I keep you in the name of your own heart.

FATHER HART

Because I put away the crucifix
I am but nothing, and my power is nothing.
I'll bring it here again.

MAURTEEN (*clinging to him*)

No.

BRIDGET

Do not leave us.

FATHER HART

O, let me go before it is too late;
It is my sin alone that brought it all.

(*Singing outside.*)

THE CHILD

I hear them sing, "Come, newly-married bride,
Come, to the woods and waters and pale lights."

MARY

I will go with you.

FATHER HART

She is lost, alas!

THE CHILD (*Standing by the door*)

But clinging mortal hope must fall from you,
For we who ride the winds, run on the waves,
And dance upon the mountains are more light
Than dewdrops on the banner of the dawn.

MARY

O, take me with you.

SHAWN

Beloved, I will keep you.
I've more than words, I have these arms to hold you,

Nor all the faery host, do what they please,
Shall ever make me loose you from these arms.

MARY

Dear face! Dear voice!

THE CHILD

Come, newly-married bride.

MARY

I always loved her world—and yet—and yet——

THE CHILD

White bird, white bird, come with me, little bird.

MARY

She calls me!

THE CHILD

Come with me, little bird.

(*Distant dancing figures appear in the wood.*)

MARY

I can hear songs and dancing.

SHAWN

Stay with me.

MARY

I think that I would stay—and yet—and yet——

THE CHILD

Come, little bird, with crest of gold.

MARY (*very softly*)

And yet——

THE CHILD

Come, little bird with silver feet!

(MARY BRUIN *dies, and the* CHILD *goes.*)

SHAWN

She is dead!

BRIDGET

Come from that image; body and soul are gone.
You have thrown your arms about a drift of leaves,
Or bole of an ash-tree changed into her image.

FATHER HART

Thus do the spirits of evil snatch their prey,
Almost out of the very hand of God;
And day by day their power is more and more,
And men and women leave old paths, for pride
Comes knocking with thin knuckles on the heart.

(*Outside there are dancing figures, and it may be a white bird, and many voices singing:*)

"The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,
And the lonely of heart is withered away;
[While the faeries dance in a place apart,
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur and sing
Of a land where even the old are fair,
And even the wise are merry of tongue;
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say—
'When the wind has laughed and murmured and sung,
The lonely of heart is withered away.'"]

# NOTE

THIS little play was produced at the Avenue Theatre in the spring of 1894, with the following cast: Maurteen Bruin, Mr. James Welch; Shawn Bruin, Mr. A. E. W. Mason; Father Hart, Mr. G. R. Foss; Bridget Bruin, Miss Charlotte Morland; Mary Bruin, Miss Winifred Fraser: A Faery Child, Miss Dorothy Paget. It ran for a little over six weeks. It was revived in America in 1901, when it was taken on tour by Mrs. Lemoyne. It has been played two or three times professionally since then in America and a great many times in England and America by amateurs. Till lately it was not part of the repertory of the Abbey Theatre, for I had grown to dislike it without knowing what I disliked in it. This winter, however, I have made many revisions and now it plays well enough to give me pleasure. It is printed in this book in the new form, which was acted for the first time on February 22, 1912, at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. At the Abbey Theatre, where the platform of the stage comes out in front of the curtain, the curtain falls before the priest's last words. He remains outside the curtain and the words are spoken to the audience like an epilogue.

W. B. YEATS.

ABBEY THEATRE, DUBLIN.
*March*, 1912.

THE COUNTESS
CATHLEEN . .

*The sorrowful are dumb for thee.*

Lament of Morion Shehone for Miss Mary Bourke.

To

MAUD GONNE

| | |
|---|---|
| Shemus Rua . . . . . | A Peasant |
| Mary . . . . . | His Wife |
| Teig . . . . . | His Son |
| Aleel . . . . . | A Poet |
| The Countess Cathleen | |
| Oona . . . . | Her Foster Mother |
| Two Demons disguised as Merchants | |
| Peasants, Servants, Angelical Beings | |

---

*The Scene is laid in Ireland and in old times*

## SCENE I

SCENE.—*A room with lighted fire, and a door into the open air, through which one sees, perhaps, the trees of a wood and these trees should be painted in flat colour upon a gold or diapered sky. The walls are of one colour. The scene should have the effect of missal painting.* MARY, *a woman of forty years or so, is grinding a quern.*

MARY

What can have made the grey hen flutter so?

(TEIG, *a boy of fourteen, is coming in with turf which he lays beside the hearth.*)

TEIG

They say that now the land is famine struck
The graves are walking.

MARY

There is something that the hen hears

TEIG

And that is not the worst; at Tubber-vanach

A woman met a man with ears spread out,
And they moved up and down like a bat's wing.

MARY

What can have kept your father all this while?

TEIG

Two night's ago, at Carrick-orus churchyard,
A herdsman met a man who had no mouth,
Nor eyes, nor ears! his face a wall of flesh;
He saw him plainly by the light of the moon.

MARY

Look out, and tell me if your father's coming.

(TEIG *goes to door.*)

TEIG

Mother!

MARY

What is it?

TEIG

In the bush beyond,
There are two birds—if you can call them birds—
I could not see them rightly for the leaves.

But they've the shape and colour of horned owls
And I'm half certain they've a human face.

MARY

Mother of God, defend us!

TEIG

They're looking at me.
What is the good of praying? father says.
God and the Mother of God have dropped asleep.
What do they care, he says, though the whole land
Squeal like a rabbit under a weasel's tooth?

MARY

You'll bring misfortune with your blasphemies
Upon your father, or yourself, or me.
Would God that he were home—ah, there he is.
(SHEMUS *comes in.*
What was it kept you in the wood? You know
I cannot get all sorts of accidents
Out of my mind till you are home again.

SHEMUS

I'm in no mood to listen to your clatter.
Although I tramped the woods for half a day,

I've taken nothing, for the very rats,
Badgers, and hedgehogs seem to have died of drought,
And there was scarce a wind in the parched leaves.

TEIG

Then you have brought no dinner.

SHEMUS

After that
I sat among the beggars at the cross-roads,
And held a hollow hand among the others.

MARY

What, did you beg?

SHEMUS

I had no chance to beg,
For when the beggars saw me they cried out
They would not have another share their alms,
And hunted me away with sticks and stones.

TEIG

You said that you would bring us food or money.

SHEMUS

What's in the house?

TEIG

A bit of mouldy bread.

MARY

There's flour enough to make another loaf.

TEIG

And when that's gone?

MARY

There is the hen in the coop.

SHEMUS

My curse upon the beggars, my curse upon them!

TEIG

And the last penny gone.

SHEMUS

When the hen's gone,
What can we do but live on sorrel and dock,
And dandelion, till our mouths are green?

MARY

God, that to this hour's found bit and sup,
Will cater for us still.

SHEMUS

His kitchen's bare.
There were five doors that I looked through this day
And saw the dead and not a soul to wake them

MARY

Maybe He'd have us die because He knows,
When the ear is stopped and when the eye is stopped,
That every wicked sight is hid from the eye,
And all fool talk from the ear.

SHEMUS

Who's passing there?
And mocking us with music?
(*A stringed instrument without.*)

TEIG

A young man plays it,
There's an old woman and a lady with him.

SHEMUS

What is the trouble of the poor to her?
Nothing at all or a harsh radishy sauce
For the day's meat.

MARY

God's pity on the rich.

Had we been through as many doors, and seen
The dishes standing on the polished wood
In the wax candle light, we'd be as hard,
And there's the needle's eye at the end of all.

SHEMUS

My curse upon the rich.

TEIG

They're coming here.

SHEMUS

Then down upon that stool, down quick, I say,
And call up a whey face and a whining voice,
And let your head be bowed upon your knees.

MARY

Had I but time to put the place to rights.

(CATHLEEN, OONA, *and* ALEEL *enter*.)

CATHLEEN

God save all here. There is a certain house,
An old grey castle with a kitchen garden,
A cider orchard and a plot for flowers,
Somewhere among these woods

MARY

We know it, lady.
A place that's set among impassable walls
As though world's trouble could not find it out.

CATHLEEN

It may be that we are that trouble, for we—
Although we've wandered in the wood this hour—
Have lost it too, yet I should know my way,
For I lived all my childhood in that house.

MARY

Then you are Countess Cathleen?

CATHLEEN

And this woman,
Oona, my nurse, should have remembered it,
For we were happy for a long time there.

OONA

The paths are overgrown with thickets now,
Or else some change has come upon my sight.

CATHLEEN

And this young man, that should have known the woods—

Because we met him on their border but now,
Wandering and singing like a wave of the sea—
Is so wrapped up in dreams of terrors to come
That he can give no help.

MARY

You have still some way,
But I can put you on the trodden path
Your servants take when they are marketing.
But first sit down and rest yourself awhile,
For my old fathers served your fathers, lady,
Longer than books can tell—and it were strange
If you and yours should not be welcome here.

CATHLEEN

And it were stranger still were I ungrateful
For such kind welcome—but I must be gone,
For the night's gathering in.

SHEMUS

It is a long while
Since I've set eyes on bread or on what buys it.

CATHLEEN

So you are starving even in this wood,
Where I had thought I would find nothing changed

But that's a dream, for the old worm o' the world
Can eat its way into what place it pleases.

(*She gives money.*)

TEIG

Beautiful lady, give me something too;
I fell but now, being weak with hunger and thirst.
And lay upon the threshold like a log.

CATHLEEN

I gave for all and that was all I had.
Look, my purse is empty. I have passed
By starving men and women all this day,
And they have had the rest; but take the purse,
The silver clasps on't may be worth a trifle.
And if you'll come to-morrow to my house
You shall have twice the sum.

(ALEEL *begins to play.*)

SHEMUS (*muttering*)

What, music, music!

CATHLEEN

Ah, do not blame the finger on the string;
The doctors bid me fly the unlucky times

And find distraction for my thoughts, or else
Pine to my grave.

SHEMUS

I have said nothing, lady.
Why should the like of us complain?

OONA

Have done.
Sorrows that she's but read of in a book
Weigh on her mind as if they had been her own.

(OONA, MARY, *and* CATHLEEN *go out.* ALEEL *looks defiantly at* SHEMUS.)

ALEEL (*singing*)

Were I but crazy for love's sake
I know who'd measure out his length,
I know the heads that I should break,
For crazy men have double strength.
There! all's out now to leave or take,
And who mocks music mocks at love;
And when I'm crazy for love's sake
I'll not go far to choose.

(*Snapping his fingers in* SHEMUS' *face.*)

Enough!

I know the heads that I should break.

(*He takes a step towards the door and then turns again.*)

Shut to the door before the night has fallen,
For who can say what walks, or in what shape
Some devilish creature flies in the air, but now
Two grey-horned owls hooted above our heads.

(*He goes out, his singing dies away.* MARY *comes in.* SHEMUS *has been counting the money.*)

SHEMUS

So that fool's gone.

TEIG

He's seen the horned owls too.
There's no good luck in owls, but it may be
That the ill luck's to fall upon his head.

MARY

You never thanked her ladyship.

SHEMUS

Thank her,
For seven halfpence and a silver bit?

TEIG

But for this empty purse?

SHEMUS

What's that for thanks
Or what's the double of it that she promised?
With bread and flesh and every sort of food
Up to a price no man has heard the like of
And rising every day.

MARY

We have all she had;
She emptied out the purse before our eyes.

SHEMUS (*to* MARY, *who has gone to close the door*)

Leave that door open.

MARY

When those that have read books,
And seen the seven wonders of the world,
Fear what's above or what's below the ground,
It's time that poverty should bolt the door.

SHEMUS

I'll have no bolts, for there is not a thing
That walks above the ground or under it
I had not rather welcome to this house
Than any more of mankind, rich or poor.

TEIG

So that they brought us money.

SHEMUS

I heard say
There's something that appears like a white bird,
A pigeon or a seagull or the like,
But if you hit it with a stone or a stick
It clangs as though it had been made of brass,
And that if you dig down where it was scratching
You'll find a crock of gold.

TEIG

But dream of gold
For three nights running, and there's always gold.

SHEMUS

You might be starved before you've dug it out.

TEIG

But maybe if you called, something would come,
They have been seen of late.

MARY

Is it call devils?
Call devils from the wood, call them in here?

SHEMUS

So you'd stand up against me, and you'd say
Who or what I am to welcome here. (*He hits her.*)
That is to show who's master.

TEIG

Call them in.

MARY

God help us all!

SHEMUS

Pray, if you have a mind to.
It's little that the sleepy ears above
Care for your words; but I'll call what I please.

TEIG

There is many a one, they say, had money from them.

SHEMUS (*at door*)

Whatever you are that walk the woods at night,
So be it that you have not shouldered up
Out of a grave—for I'll have nothing human—
And have free hands, a friendly trick of speech,
I welcome you. Come, sit beside the fire.
What matter if your head's below your arms

Or you've a horse's tail to whip your flank,
Feathers instead of hair, that's all but nothing,
Come, share what bread and meat is in the house,
And stretch your heels and warm them in the ashes.
And after that, let's share and share alike
And curse all men and women. Come in, come in.
What, is there no one there? *(Turning from door.)*
And yet they say
They are as common as the grass, and ride
Even upon the book in the priest's hand.

(TEIG *lifts one arm slowly and points toward the door and begins moving backward.* SHEMUS *turns, he also sees something and begins moving backward.* MARY *does the same. A man dressed as an Eastern merchant comes in carrying a small carpet. He unrolls it and sits cross-legged at one end of it. Another man dressed in the same way follows, and sits at the other end. This is done slowly and deliberately. When they are seated they take money out of embroidered purses at their girdles and begin arranging it on the carpet.)*

TEIG

You speak to them.

SHEMUS

No, you.

TEIG

'Twas you that called them.

SHEMUS (*coming nearer*)

I'd make so bold, if you would pardon it,
To ask if there's a thing you'd have of us.
Although we are but poor people, if there is,
Why, if there is——

FIRST MERCHANT

We've travelled a long road,
For we are merchants that must tramp the world,
And now we look for supper and a fire
And a safe corner to count money in.

SHEMUS

I thought you were . . . but that's no matter now—
There had been words between my wife and me
Because I said I would be master here,
And ask in what I pleased or who I pleased
And so . . . but that is nothing to the point,
Because it's certain that you are but merchants.

FIRST MERCHANT

We travel for the Master of all merchants.

SHEMUS

Yet if you were that I had thought but now
I'd welcome you no less. Be what you please
And you'll have supper at the market rate,
That means that what was sold for but a penny
Is now worth fifty.

(MERCHANTS *begin putting money on carpet.*)

FIRST MERCHANT

Our Master bids us pay
So good a price, that all who deal with us
Shall eat, drink, and be merry.

SHEMUS (*to* MARY)

Bestir yourself,
Go kill and draw the fowl, while Teig and I
Lay out the plates and make a better fire.

MARY

I will not cook for you.

SHEMUS

Not cook! not cook!
Do not be angry. She wants to pay me back

Because I struck her in that argument.
But she'll get sense again. Since the dearth came
We rattle one on another as though we were
Knives thrown into a basket to be cleaned.

MARY

I will not cook for you, because I know
In what unlucky shape you sat but now
Outside this door.

TEIG

It's this, your honours:
Because of some wild words my father said
She thinks you are not of those who cast a shadow.

SHEMUS

I said I'd make the devils of the wood
Welcome, if they'd a mind to eat and drink;
But it is certain that you are men like us.

FIRST MERCHANT

It's strange that she should think we cast no shadow,
For there is nothing on the ridge of the world
That's more substantial than the merchants are
That buy and sell you.

MARY

If you are not demons,
And seeing what great wealth is spread out there,
Give food or money to the starving poor.

FIRST MERCHANT

If we knew how to find deserving poor
We'd do our share.

MARY

But seek them patiently.

FIRST MERCHANT

We know the evils of mere charity.

MARY

Those scruples may befit a common time.
I had thought there was a pushing to and fro,
At times like this, that overset the scale
And trampled measure down.

FIRST MERCHANT

But if already
We'd thought of a more prudent way than that?

SECOND MERCHANT

' each one brings a bit of merchandise,
'e'll give him such a price he never dreamt of.

MARY

Where shall the starving come at merchandise?

FIRST MERCHANT

We will ask nothing but what all men have.

MARY

Their swine and cattle, fields and implements
are sold and gone.

FIRST MERCHANT

They have not sold all yet
For there's a vapourous thing—that may be nothing,
But that's the buyer's risk—a second self,
They call immortal for a story's sake.

SHEMUS

They come to buy our souls?

TEIG

I'll barter mine.
Why should we starve for what may be but nothing?

MARY

Teig and Shemus——

SHEMUS

What can it be but nothing?
What has God poured out of His bag but famine?
Satan gives money.

TEIG

Yet no thunder stirs.

FIRST MERCHANT

There is a heap for each.

(SHEMUS *goes to take money.*)

But no, not yet,
For there's a work I have to set you to.

SHEMUS

So then you're as deceitful as the rest,
And all that talk of buying what's but a vapour
Is fancy bread. I might have known as much,
Because that's how the trick-o'-the-loop man talks.

FIRST MERCHANT

That's for the work, each has its separate price;
But neither price is paid till the work's done.

TEIG

'he same for me.

MARY

Oh, God, why are you still?

FIRST MERCHANT

'ou've but to cry aloud at every cross-road,
.t every house door, that we buy men's souls.
.nd give so good a price that all may live
n mirth and comfort till the famine's done,
ecause we are Christian man.

SHEMUS

Come, let's away.

TEIG

shall keep running till I've earned the price.

SECOND MERCHANT

(*who has risen and gone towards fire*)

top; you must have proof behind the words.
o here's your entertainment on the road.

(*He throws a bag of money on the ground.*)

.ive as you please; our Master's generous.

(TEIG *and* SHEMUS *have stopped.* TEIG *takes the money. They go out.*)

MARY

Destroyers of souls, God will destroy you quickly.
You shall at last dry like dry leaves and hang
Nailed like dead vermin to the doors of God.

SECOND MERCHANT

Curse to your fill, for saints will have their dreams.

FIRST MERCHANT

Though we're but vermin that our Master sent
To overrun the world, he at the end
Shall pull apart the pale ribs of the moon
And quench the stars in the ancestral night.

MARY

God is all powerful.

SECOND MERCHANT

Pray, you shall need Him.
You shall eat dock and grass, and dandelion,
Till that low threshold there becomes a wall,
And when your hands can scarcely drag your body
We shall be near you.

(MARY *faints*

(*The* FIRST MERCHANT *takes up the carpet, sprea*
*it before the fire and stands in front of*
*warming his hands.*)

FIRST MERCHANT

Our faces go unscratched.
Wring the neck o' that fowl; scatter the flour
And look if there is bread upon the shelves.
We'll turn the fowl upon the spit and roast it,
And eat the supper we were bidden to,
Now that the house is quiet, praise our Master,
And stretch and warm our heels among the ashes.

END OF SCENE I.

## SCENE II

FRONT SCENE.—*A wood with perhaps distant views of turreted house at one side, but all in flat colour, without light and shade and against a diapered or gold background.*

COUNTESS CATHLEEN *comes in leaning upon* ALEEL'S *arm.* OONA *follows them.*

CATHLEEN (*stopping*)

Surely this leafy corner, where one smells
The wild bee's honey, has a story too?

OONA

There is the house at last.

ALEEL

A man, they say,
Loved Maeve the Queen of all the invisible host,
And died of his love nine centuries ago.
And now, when the moon's riding at the full,
She leaves her dancers lonely and lies there

Upon that level place, and for three days
Stretches and sighs and wets her long pale cheeks.

CATHLEEN

So she loves truly.

ALEEL

No, but wets her cheeks,
Lady, because she has forgot his name.

CATHLEEN

She'd sleep that trouble away—though it must be
A heavy trouble to forget his name—
If she had better sense.

OONA

Your own house, lady.

ALEEL

She sleeps high up on wintry Knock-na-rea
In an old cairn of stones; while her poor women
Must lie and jog in the wave if they would sleep—
Being water born—yet if she cry their names
They run up on the land and dance in the moon
Till they are giddy and would love as men do,
And be as patient and as pitiful.

But there is nothing that will stop in their heads
They've such poor memories, though they weep for it.
Oh, yes, they weep; that's when the moon is full.

CATHLEEN

Is it because they have short memories
They live so long?

ALEEL

What's memory but the ash
That chokes our fires that have begun to sink?
And they've a dizzy, everlasting fire.

OONA

There is your own house, lady.

CATHLEEN

Why, that's true,
And we'd have passed it without noticing.

ALEEL

A curse upon it for a meddlesome house!
Had it but stayed away I would have known
What Queen Maeve thinks on when the moon is pinched;

And whether now—as in the old days—the dancers
Set their brief love on men.

OONA

Rest on my arm.
These are no thoughts for any Christian ear.

ALEEL

I am younger, she would be too heavy for you.

(*He begins taking his lute out of the bag*; CATHLEEN, *who has turned towards* OONA, *turns back to him.*)

This hollow box remembers every foot
That danced upon the level grass of the world,
And will tell secrets if I whisper to it.

(*Sings.*)

Lift up the white knee;
Hear what they sing,
Those young dancers
That in a ring
Raved but now
Of the hearts that broke
Long, long ago
For their sake.

OONA

New friends are sweet.

ALEEL

" But the dance changes.
Lift up the gown,
All that sorrow
Is trodden down."

OONA

The empty rattle-pate! Lean on this arm,
That I can tell you is a christened arm,
And not like some, if we are to judge by speech.
But as you please. It is time I was forgot.
Maybe it is not on this arm you slumbered
When you were as helpless as a worm.

ALEEL

Stay with me till we come to your own house.

CATHLEEN (*sitting down*)

When I am rested I will need no help.

ALEEL

I thought to have kept her from remembering

The evil of the times for full ten minutes;
But now when seven are out you come between.

OONA

Talk on; what does it matter what you say,
For you have not been christened?

ALEEL

Old woman, old woman,
You robbed her of three minutes peace of mind,
And though you live unto a hundred years,
And wash the feet of beggars and give alms,
And climb Croaghpatrick, you shall not be pardoned.

OONA

How does a man who never was baptized
Know what Heaven pardons?

ALEEL

You are a sinful woman.

OONA

I care no more than if a pig had grunted.

(*Enter* CATHLEEN'S *Steward.*)

STEWARD

I am not to blame, for I had locked the gate,
The forester's to blame. The men climbed in
At the east corner where the elm-tree is.

CATHLEEN

I do not understand you, who has climbed?

STEWARD

Then God be thanked, I am the first to tell you.
I was afraid some other of the servants—
Though I've been on the watch—had been the first,
And mixed up truth and lies, your ladyship.

CATHLEEN (*rising*)

Has some misfortune happened?

STEWARD

Yes, indeed
The forester that let the branches lie
Against the wall's to blame for everything,
For that is how the rogues got into the garden.

CATHLEEN

I thought to have escaped misfortune here.
Has any one been killed?

STEWARD

Oh, no, not killed.
They have ſtolen half a cart-load of green cabbage

CATHLEEN

But maybe they were ſtarving.

STEWARD

That is certain.
To rob or ſtarve, that was the choice they had.

CATHLEEN

A learned theologian has laid down
That ſtarving men may take what's necessary,
And yet be sinless.

OONA

Sinless and a thief!
There should be broken bottles on the wall.

CATHLEEN

And if it be a sin, while faith's unbroken
God cannot help but pardon. There is no soul
But it's unlike all others in the world,
Nor one but lifts a ſtrangeness to God's love

Till that's grown infinite, and therefore none
Whose loss were less than irremediable
Although it were the wickedest in the world.

(*Enter* TEIG *and* SHEMUS.)

STEWARD

What are you running for? Pull off your cap,
Do you not see who's there?

SHEMUS

I cannot wait.
I am running to the world with the best news
That has been brought it for a thousand years.

STEWARD

Then get your breath and speak.

SHEMUS

If you'd my news
You'd run as fast and be as out of breath.

TEIG

Such news, we shall be carried on men's shoulders.

SHEMUS

There's something every man has carried with him

STEWARD

Oh, no, not killed.
They have stolen half a cart-load of green cabbage

CATHLEEN

But maybe they were starving.

STEWARD

That is certain.
To rob or starve, that was the choice they had.

CATHLEEN

A learned theologian has laid down
That starving men may take what's necessary,
And yet be sinless.

OONA

Sinless and a thief!
There should be broken bottles on the wall.

CATHLEEN

And if it be a sin, while faith's unbroken
God cannot help but pardon. There is no soul
But it's unlike all others in the world,
Nor one but lifts a strangeness to God's love

Till that's grown infinite, and therefore none
Whose loss were less than irremediable
Although it were the wickedest in the world.

(*Enter* TEIG *and* SHEMUS.)

STEWARD

What are you running for? Pull off your cap,
Do you not see who's there?

SHEMUS

I cannot wait.
I am running to the world with the best news
That has been brought it for a thousand years.

STEWARD

Then get your breath and speak.

SHEMUS

If you'd my news
You'd run as fast and be as out of breath.

TEIG

Such news, we shall be carried on men's shoulders.

SHEMUS

There's something every man has carried with him

And thought no more about than if it were
A mouthful of the wind ; and now it's grown
A marketable thing !

TEIG

And yet it seemed
As useless as the paring of one's nails.

SHEMUS

What sets me laughing when I think of it,
Is that a rogue who's lain in lousy straw,
If he but sell it, may set up his coach.

TEIG (*laughing*)

There are two gentlemen who buy men's souls.

CATHLEEN

O God !

TEIG

And maybe there's no soul at all.

STEWARD

They're drunk or mad.

TEIG

Look at the price they give.
(*Showing money.*)

SHEMUS (*tossing up money*)

" Go cry it all about the world," they said.
" Money for souls, good money for a soul "

CATHLEEN

Give twice and thrice and twenty times their money.
And get your souls again. I will pay all.

SHEMUS

Not we! not we! For souls—if there are souls—
But keep the flesh out of its merriment.
I shall be drunk and merry.

TEIG

Come, let's away.
(*He goes.*)

CATHLEEN

But there's a world to come.

SHEMUS

And if there is,
I'd rather trust myself into the hands

(ALEEL *and* OONA *return*)

CATHLEEN

They have not come; speak quickly.

ALEEL

One drew his knife
And said that he would kill the man or woman
That stopped his way; and when I would have stopped him
He made this stroke at me; but it is nothing.

CATHLEEN

You shall be tended. From this day for ever
I'll have no joy or sorrow of my own.

OONA

Their eyes shone like the eyes of birds of prey.

CATHLEEN

Come, follow me, for the earth burns my feet
Till I have changed my house to such a refuge
That the old and ailing, and all weak of heart,
May escape from beak and claw; all, all, shall come
Till the walls burst and the roof fall on us.
From this day out I have nothing of my own.

(*She goes.*)

OONA (*taking* ALEEL *by the arm as she speaks, bandaging his wound*)

She has found something now to put her hand to,
And you and I are of no more account
Than flies upon a window-pane in the winter.

(*They go out.*)

END OF SCENE II.

## SCENE III

SCENE.—*Hall in the house of* COUNTESS CATHLEEN. *At the Left an oratory with steps leading up to it. At the Right a tapestried wall, more or less repeating the form of the oratory, and a great chair with its back against the wall. In the Centre are two or more arches through which one can see dimly the trees in the garden.* CATHLEEN *is kneeling in front of the altar in the oratory; there is a hanging lighted lamp over the altar.* ALEEL *enters.*

ALEEL

I have come to bid you leave this castle and fly
Out of these woods.

CATHLEEN

What evil is there here
That is not everywhere from this to the sea?

ALEEL

They who have sent me walk invisible.

CATHLEEN

So it is true what I have heard men say,
That you have seen and heard what others cannot.

ALEEL

I was asleep in my bed, and while I slept
My dreams became a fire; and in the fire
One walked and he had birds about his head.

CATHLEEN

I have heard that one of the old gods walked so.

ALEEL

It may be that he is angelical;
And, lady, he bids me call you from these woods.
And you must bring but your old foster-mother,
And some few serving men, and live in the hills,
Among the sounds of music and the light
Of waters, till the evil days are done.
For here some terrible death is waiting you,
Some unimagined evil, some great darkness
That fable has not dreamt of, nor sun nor moon
Scattered.

CATHLEEN

No, not angelical.

ALEEL

This house
You are to leave with some old trusty man,

And bid him shelter all that ſtarve or wander
While there is food and house room.

CATHLEEN

He bids me go
Where none of mortal creatures but the swan
Dabbles, and there you would pluck the harp, when
the trees
Had made a heavy shadow about our door,
And talk among the ruſtling of the reeds,
When night hunted the foolish sun away
With ſtillness and pale tapers. No—no—no!
I cannot. Although I weep, I do not weep
Because that life would be moſt happy, and here
I find no way, no end. Nor do I weep
Because I had longed to look upon your face,
But that a night of prayer has made me weary.

ALEEL (*proſtrating himself before her*)
Let Him that made mankind, the angels and devils
And dearth and plenty, mend what He has made,
For when we labour in vain and eye ſtill sees
Heart breaks in vain.

CATHLEEN

How would that quiet end?

ALEEL

How but in healing?

CATHLEEN

You have seen my tears
And I can see your hand shake on the floor.

ALEEL (*faltering*)

I thought but of healing. He was angelical.

CATHLEEN (*turning away from him*)

No, not angelical, but of the old gods,
Who wander about the world to awaken the heart—
The passionate, proud heart—that all the angels,
Leaving nine heavens empty, would rock to sleep.

(*She goes to chapel door;* ALEEL *holds his clasped hands towards her for a moment hesitatingly, and then lets them fall beside him.*)

CATHLEEN

Do not hold out to me beseeching hands.
This heart shall never waken on earth. I have sworn,
By her whose heart the seven sorrows have pierced,
To pray before this altar until my heart

Has grown to Heaven like a tree, and there
Rustled its leaves, till Heaven has saved my people.

ALEEL (*who has risen*)

When one so great has spoken of love to one
So little as I, though to deny him love,
What can he but hold out beseeching hands,
Then let them fall beside him, knowing how greatly
They have overdared?

(*He goes towards the door of the hall. The* COUNTESS CATHLEEN *takes a few steps towards him.*)

CATHLEEN

If the old tales are true,
Queens have wed shepherds and kings beggar-maids;
God's procreant waters flowing about your mind
Have made you more than kings and queens; and not you
But I am the empty pitcher.

ALEEL

Being silent
I have said all, yet let me stay beside you.

CATHLEEN

No, no, not while my heart is shaken. No,
But you shall hear wind cry and water cry,
And curlew cry, and have the peace I longed for.

ALEEL

Give me your hand to kiss.

CATHLEEN

I kiss your forehead.
And yet I send you from me. Do not speak;
There have been women that bid men to rob
Crowns from the Country-under-Wave or apples
Upon a dragon-guarded hill, and all
That they might sift men's hearts and wills,
And trembled as they bid it, as I tremble
That lay a hard task on you, that you go,
And silently, and do not turn your head;
Goodbye; but do not turn your head and look;
Above all else, I would not have you look.

(ALEEL *goes.*)

I never spoke to him of his wounded hand,
And now he is gone. (*She looks out.*)
I cannot see him, for all is dark outside.

Would my imagination and my heart
Were as little shaken as this holy flame!

(*She goes slowly into the chapel. The distant sound of an alarm bell. The two* MERCHANTS *enter hurriedly.*)

SECOND MERCHANT

They are ringing the alarm, and in a moment
They'll be upon us.

FIRST MERCHANT (*going to a door at the side*)

Here is the Treasury,
You'd my commands to put them all to sleep.

SECOND MERCHANT

Some angel or else her prayers protected them.

(*Goes into the Treasury and returns with bags of treasure.* FIRST MERCHANT *has been listening at the oratory door.*)

FIRST MERCHANT

She has fallen asleep.

(SECOND MERCHANT *goes out through one of the arches at the back and stands listening. The bags are at his feet.*)

SECOND MERCHANT

We've all the treasure now,
So let's away before they've tracked us out.

FIRST MERCHANT

I have a plan to win her.

SECOND MERCHANT

You have time enough
If you would kill her and bear off her soul
Before they are upon us with their prayers;
They search the Western Tower.

FIRST MERCHANT

That may not be.
We cannot face the heavenly host in arms.
Her soul must come to us of its own will,
But being of the ninth and mightiest Hell
Where all are kings, I have a plan to win it.
Lady, we've news that's crying out for speech.

(CATHLEEN *wakes and comes to door of chapel.*)

CATHLEEN

Who calls?

FIRST MERCHANT

Lady, we have brought news.

CATHLEEN

What are you?

FIRST MERCHANT

We are merchants, and we know the book of the world
Because we have walked upon its leaves; and there
Have read of late matters that much concern you;
And noticing the castle door stand open,
Came in to find an ear.

CATHLEEN

The door stands open,
That no one who is famished or afraid,
Despair of help or of a welcome with it.
But you have news, you say.

FIRST MERCHANT

We saw a man,
Heavy with sickness in the bog of Allen,
Whom you had bid buy cattle. Near Fair Head
We saw your grain ships lying all becalmed
In the dark night; and not less still than they,
Burned all their mirrored lanthorns in the sea.

CATHLEEN

Thanks be to God there's money in the house
That can buy grain from those who have stored it up
To prosper on the hunger of the poor.
But you've been far and know the signs of things,
When will this famine end?

FIRST MERCHANT

Day copies day,
And there's no sign of change, nor can it change
With the wheat withered and the cattle dead.

CATHLEEN

And heard you of the demons who buy souls?

FIRST MERCHANT

There are some men who hold they have wolves' heads,
And say their limbs—dried by the infinite flame—
Have all the speed of storms; others, again,
Say they are gross and little; while a few
Will have it they seem much as mortals are,
But tall and brown and travelled—like us, lady—

Yet all agree a power is in their looks
That makes men bow, and flings a casting-net
About their souls, and that all men would go
And barter those poor vapours, were it not
You bribe them with the safety of your gold.

CATHLEEN

Praise God, that I am wealthy! Why do they sell?

FIRST MERCHANT

As we came in at the great doors we saw
Your porter sleeping in his niche—a soul
Too little to be worth a hundred pence,
And yet they'd buy it for a hundred crowns,
But for a soul like yours, I heard them say,
They would give five hundred thousand crowns and more.

CATHLEEN

How can a heap of crowns pay for a soul?
Is the green grave so terrible a thing?

FIRST MERCHANT

Some sell because the money gleams, and some
Because they are in terror of the grave,

And some because their neighbours sold before,
And some because there is a kind of joy
In casting hope away, in losing joy,
In ceasing all resistance, in at last
Opening one's arms to the eternal flames,
In casting all sails out upon the wind;
To this—full of the gaiety of the lost—
Would all folk hurry if your gold were gone.

CATHLEEN

There is a something, Merchant, in your voice
That makes me fear. When you were telling how
A man may lose his soul and lose his God
Your eyes were lighted up, and when you told
How my poor money serves the people, both—
Merchants forgive me—seemed to smile.

FIRST MERCHANT

I laugh
To think that all these people should be swung
As on a lady's shoe-string,—under them
The glowing leagues of never-ending flame.

CATHLEEN

There is a something in you that I fear;

A something not of us; were you not born
In some most distant corner of the world?

(*The* SECOND MERCHANT, *who has been listening at the door, comes forward, and as he comes a sound of voices and feet is heard.*)

SECOND MERCHANT

Away now—they are in the passage—hurry,
For they will know us, and freeze up our hearts
With Ave Marys, and burn all our skin
With holy water.

FIRST MERCHANT

Farewell; for we must ride
Many a mile before the morning come;
Our horses beat the ground impatiently.

(*They go out. A number of* PEASANTS *enter by other door.*)

FIRST PEASANT

Forgive us, lady, but we heard a noise.

SECOND PEASANT

We sat by the fireside telling vanities.

FIRST PEASANT

We heard a noise, but though we have searched the house
We have found nobody.

CATHLEEN

You are too timid,
For now you are safe from all the evil times,
There is no evil that can find you here.

OONA (*entering hurriedly*)

Ochone! Ochone! The treasure room is broken in.
The door stands open, and the gold is gone.
(PEASANTS *raise a cry*.)

CATHLEEN

Be silent. (*The cry ceases*.) Have you seen nobody?

OONA

Ochone!
That my good mistress should lose all this money.

CATHLEEN

Let those among you—not too old to ride—

Get horses and search all the country round,
I'll give a farm to him who finds the thieves.

(*A man with keys at his girdle has come in while she speaks. There is a general murmur of "The porter! the porter!"*)

PORTER

Demons were here. I sat beside the door
In my stone niche, and two owls passed me by,
Whispering with human voices.

OLD MERCHANT

God forsakes us.

CATHLEEN

Old man, old man, He never closed a door
Unless one opened. I am desolate,
Because of a strange thought that's in my heart;
But I have still my faith; therefore be silent;
For surely He does not forsake the world,
But stands before it modelling in the clay
And moulding there His image. Age by age
The clay wars with His fingers and pleads hard
For its old, heavy, dull and shapeless ease:

But sometimes—though His hand is on it still—
It moves awry and demon hordes are born.

(PEASANTS *cross themselves.*)

Yet leave me now, for I am desolate,
I hear a whisper from beyond the thunder.

(*She comes from the oratory door.*)

Yet stay an instant. When we meet again
I may have grown forgetful. Oona, take
These two—the larder and the dairy keys.

(*To the* PORTER.)

But take you this. It opens the small room
Of herbs for medicine, of hellebore,
Of vervain, monkshood, plantain, and self-heal.
The book of cures is on the upper shelf.

PORTER

Why do you do this, lady; did you see
Your coffin in a dream?

CATHLEEN

Ah, no, not that.
But I have come to a strange thought. I have heard
A sound of wailing in unnumbered hovels,

And I must go down, down—I know not where—
Pray for all men and women mad from famine;
Pray, you good neighbours.

(*The* PEASANTS *all kneel.* COUNTESS CATHLEEN *ascends the steps to the door of the oratory, and turning round stands there motionless for a little, and then cries in a loud voice:*)

Mary, Queen of angels
And all you clouds on clouds of saints, farewell!

END OF SCENE III.

## SCENE IV

SCENE.—*A wood near the Castle, as in Scene II. A group of* PEASANTS *pass.*

FIRST PEASANT

I have seen silver and copper, but not gold.

SECOND PEASANT

It's yellow and it shines.

FIRST PEASANT

It's beautiful.
The most beautiful thing under the sun,
That's what I've heard.

THIRD PEASANT

I have seen gold enough.

FOURTH PEASANT

I would not say that it's so beautiful.

FIRST PEASANT

But doesn't a gold piece glitter like the sun?
That's what my father, who'd seen better days,
Told me when I was but a little boy—
So high—so high, it's shining like the sun,
Round and shining, that is what he said.

SECOND PEASANT

There's nothing in the world it cannot buy.

FIRST PEASANT

They've bags and bags of it.

(*They go out. The two* MERCHANTS *follow silently. Then* ALEEL *passes over the stage singing.*)

ALEEL

Impetuous heart be still, be still
Your sorrowful love can never be told,
Cover it up with a lonely tune.
He who could bend all things to His will
Has covered the door of the infinite fold
With the pale stars and the wandering moon.

END OF SCENE IV.

## SCENE V

SCENE.—*The house of* SHEMUS RUA. *There is an alcove at the back with curtains; in it a bed, and on the bed is the body of* MARY *with candles round it. The two* MERCHANTS *while they speak put a large book upon a table, arrange money, and so on.*

FIRST MERCHANT

Thanks to that lie I told about the ships
And that about the herdsman lying sick,
We shall be too much thronged with souls to-morrow

SECOND MERCHANT

What has she in her coffers now but mice?

FIRST MERCHANT

When the night fell and I had shaped myself
Into the image of the man-headed owl,
I hurried to the cliffs of Donegal,
And saw with all their canvas full of wind
And rushing through the parti-coloured sea

Those ships that bring the women grain and meal.
They're but three days from us.

SECOND MERCHANT

When the dew rose
I hurried in like feathers to the east,
And saw nine hundred oxen driven through Meath
With goads of iron. They're but three days from us

FIRST MERCHANT

Three days for traffic.

(PEASANTS *crowd in with* TEIG *and* SHEMUS.)

SHEMUS

Come in, come in, you are welcome.
That is my wife. She mocked at my great masters,
And would not deal with them. Now there she is;
She does not even know she was a fool,
So great a fool she was.

TEIG

She would not eat
One crumb of bread bought with our master's money,
But lived on nettles, dock, and dandelion.

SHEMUS

There's nobody could put into her head
That Death is the worst thing can happen us,
Though that sounds simple, for her tongue grew rank
With all the lies that she had heard in chapel.
Draw to the curtain. (TEIG *draws it.*) You'll not play the fool
While these good gentlemen are there to save you.

SECOND MERCHANT

Since the drought came they drift about in a throng,
Like autumn leaves blown by the dreary winds.
Come, deal—come, deal.

FIRST MERCHANT

Who will come deal with us?

SHEMUS

They are out of spirit, sir, with lack of food,
Save four or five. Here, sir, is one of these;
The others will gain courage in good time.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

I come to deal—if you give honest price.

FIRST MERCHANT (*reading in a book*)

"John Maher, a man of substance, with dull mind,
And quiet senses and unventurous heart.
The angels think him safe." Two hundred crowns,
All for a soul, a little breath of wind.

THE MAN

I ask three hundred crowns. You have read there
That no mere lapse of days can make me yours.

FIRST MERCHANT

There is something more writ here—"Often at night
He is wakeful from a dread of growing poor,
And thereon wonders if there's any man
That he could rob in safety."

A PEASANT

Who'd have thought it?
And I was once alone with him at midnight.

ANOTHER PEASANT

I will not trust my mother after this.

FIRST MERCHANT

There is this crack in you—two hundred crowns.

A Peasant

That's plenty for a rogue.

Another Peasant

I'd give him nothing.

Shemus

You'll get no more—so take what's offered you.

(*A general murmur, during which the* Middle-Aged Man *takes money, and slips into background, where he sinks on to a seat.*)

First Merchant

Has no one got a better soul than that?
If only for the credit of your parishes,
Traffic with us.

A Woman

What will you give for mine?

First Merchant (*reading in book*)

"Soft, handsome, and still young"—not much, I think.
"It's certain that the man she's married to
Knows nothing of what's hidden in the jar
Between the hour-glass and the pepper-pot."

THE WOMAN

The scandalous book.

FIRST MERCHANT

" Nor how when e's away
At the horse fair the hand that wrote wr hid
Will tap three times upon the window-p

THE WOMAN

And if there is a letter, that is no reaso
Why I should have less money than th rs.

FIRST MERCHANT

You're almost safe, I give you fifty crow
(*She trns to go.*)
A hundred, then.

SHEMUS

Woman, have sense— c come.
Is this a time to haggle at the price?
There, take it up. There, there. That'
(*She takes them and goes int crowd.*)

FIRST MERCHANT

Come, deal, deal, deal. It is but for cha

We buy such souls at all; a thousand sins
Made them our Master's long before we came.

(ALEEL *enters*.)

ALEEL

Here, take my soul, for I am tired of it.
I do not ask a price.

SHEMUS

Not ask a price?
How can you sell your soul without a price?
I would not listen to his broken wits;
His love for Countess Cathleen has so crazed him
He hardly understands what he is saying.

ALEEL

The trouble that has come on Countess Cathleen,
The sorrow that is in her wasted face,
The burden in her eyes, have broke my wits,
And yet I know I'd have you take my soul.

FIRST MERCHANT

We cannot take your soul, for it is hers.

ALEEL

No, but you must. Seeing it cannot help her
I have grown tired of it.

FIRST MERCHANT

Begone from me,
I may not touch it.

ALEEL

Is your power so small?
And must I bear it with me all my days?
May you be scorned and mocked!

FIRST MERCHANT

Drag him away
He troubles me.

(TEIG *and* SHEMUS *lead* ALEEL *into the crowd.*

SECOND MERCHANT

His gaze has filled me, brother,
With shaking and a dreadful fear.

FIRST MERCHANT

Lean forward
And kiss the circlet where my Master's lips
Were pressed upon it when he sent us hither;
You shall have peace once more.

(SECOND MERCHANT *kisses the gold circlet that is about the head of the* FIRST MERCHANT.)

I, too, grow weary,
But there is something moving in my heart
Whereby I know that what we seek the most
Is drawing near—our labour will soon end.
Come, deal, deal, deal, deal, deal; are you all dumb?
What, will you keep me from our ancient home,
And from the eternal revelry?

SECOND MERCHANT

Deal, deal.

SHEMUS

They say you beat the woman down too low.

FIRST MERCHANT

I offer this great price: a thousand crowns
For an old woman who was always ugly.

(*An old* PEASANT WOMAN *comes forward, and he takes up a book and reads:*)

There is but little set down here against her.
"She has stolen eggs and fowl when times were bad,
But when the times grew better has confessed it;
She never missed her chapel of a Sunday
And when she could, paid dues." Take up your money.

OLD WOMAN

God bless you, sir. (*She screams.*) Oh, sir, a pain
went through me!

FIRST MERCHANT

That name is like a fire to all damned souls.

(*Murmur among the* PEASANTS, *who shrink back
from her as she goes out screaming.*)

A PEASANT

How she screamed out!

SECOND PEASANT

And maybe we shall scream so.

THIRD PEASANT

I tell you there is no such place as hell.

FIRST MERCHANT

Can such a trifle turn you from your profit?
Come, deal; come, deal.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Master, I am afraid.

FIRST MERCHANT

I bought your soul, and there's no sense in fear
Now the soul's gone.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Give me my soul again.

WOMAN (*going on her knees and clinging to* MERCHANT)

And take this money too, and give me mine.

SECOND MERCHANT

Bear bastards, drink or follow some wild fancy;
For sighs and cries are the soul's work,
And you have none.

(*Throws the woman off.*)

PEASANT

Come, let's away.

ANOTHER PEASANT

Yes, yes.

ANOTHER PEASANT

Come quickly; if that woman had not screamed
I would have lost my soul.

ANOTHER PEASANT

Come, come away.

(*They turn to door, but are stopped by shouts of "Countess Cathleen! Countess Cathleen!"*)

CATHLEEN (*entering*)

And so you trade once more?

FIRST MERCHANT

In spite of you.
What brings you here, saint with the sapphire eyes?

CATHLEEN

I come to barter a soul for a great price.

SECOND MERCHANT

What matter, if the soul be worth the price?

CATHLEEN

The people starve, therefore the people go
Thronging to you. I hear a cry come from them
And it is in my ears by night and day,
And I would have five hundred thousand crowns
That I may feed them till the dearth go by.

FIRST MERCHANT

It may be the soul's worth it.

CATHLEEN

There is more:
The souls that you have bought must be set free.

FIRST MERCHANT

We know of but one soul that's worth the price.

CATHLEEN

Being my own it seems a priceless thing.

SECOND MERCHANT

You offer us——

CATHLEEN

I offer my own soul.

A PEASANT

Do not, do not, for souls the like of ours
Are not precious to God as your soul is.
O! what would heaven do without you, lady?

ANOTHER PEASANT

Look how their claws clutch in their leathern gloves.

FIRST MERCHANT

Five hundred thousand crowns; we give the price.
The gold is here; the souls even while you speak
Have slipped out of our bond, because your face
Has shed a light on them and filled their hearts.
But you must sign, for we omit no form
In buying a soul like yours.

SECOND MERCHANT

Sign with this quill.
It was a feather growing on the cock
That crowed when Peter dared deny his Master,
And all who use it have great honour in Hell.

(CATHLEEN *leans forward to sign.*)

ALEEL (*rushing forward and snatching the pen from her*)

Leave all things to the builder of the heavens.

CATHLEEN

I have no thoughts; I hear a cry—a cry.

ALEEL (*casting the pen on the ground*)

I have seen a vision under a green hedge,
A hedge of hips and haws—men yet shall hear

The Archangels rolling Satan's empty skull
Over the mountain-tops.

FIRST MERCHANT

Take him away.

(TEIG *and* SHEMUS *drag him roughly away so that he falls upon the floor among the* PEASANTS. CATHLEEN *picks up parchment and signs, then turns towards the* PEASANTS.)

CATHLEEN

Take up the money, and now come with me;
When we are far from this polluted place
I will give everybody money enough.

(*She goes out, the* PEASANTS *crowding round her and kissing her dress.* ALEEL *and the two* MERCHANTS *are left alone.*)

SECOND MERCHANT

We must away and wait until she dies,
Sitting above her tower as two grey owls,
Waiting as many years as may be, guarding
Our precious jewel; waiting to seize her soul.

FIRST MERCHANT

We need but hover over her head in the air,

For she has only minutes. When she signed
Her heart began to break. Hush, hush, I hear
The brazen door of Hell move on its hinges,
And the eternal revelry float hither
To hearten us.

SECOND MERCHANT

Leap feathered on the air
And meet them with her soul caught in your claws.

(*They rush out.* ALEEL *crawls into the middle of the room. The twilight has fallen and gradually darkens as the scene goes on. There is a distant muttering of thunder and a sound of rising storm.*)

ALEEL

The brazen door stands wide, and Balor comes
Borne in his heavy car, and demons have lifted
The age-weary eyelids from the eyes that of old
Turned gods to stone; Barach, the traitor, comes
And the lascivious race, Cailitin,
That cast a druid weakness and decay
Over Sualtem's and old Dectera's child;
And that great king Hell first took hold upon
When he killed Naisi and broke Deirdre's heart

And all their heads are twisted to one side,
For when they lived they warred on beauty and peace
With obstinate, crafty, sidelong bitterness.
Crouch down, old heron, out of the blind storm.

OONA

Where is the Countess Cathleen? All this day
Her eyes were full of tears, and when for a moment
Her hand was laid upon my hand it trembled,
And now I do not know where she is gone.

ALEEL

Cathleen has chosen other friends than us,
And they are rising through the hollow world.
Demons are out, old heron.

OONA

God guard her soul.

ALEEL

She's bartered it away this very hour,
As though we two were never in the world.
(*He points downward.*)

First, Orchill, her pale, beautiful head alive,
Her body shadowy as vapour drifting
Under the dawn, for she who awoke desire
Has but a heart of blood when others die;
About her is a vapoury multitude
Of women alluring devils with soft laughter;
Behind her a host heat of the blood made sin,
But all the little pink-white nails have grown
To be great talons.

(*He seizes* OONA *and drags her into the middle of the room and points downward with vehement gestures. The wind roars.*)

They begin a song
And there is still some music on their tongues.

OONA (*casting herself face downwards on the floor*)

O, Maker of all, protect her from the demons,
And if a soul must need be lost, take mine.

(ALEEL *kneels beside her, but does not seem to hear her words. The* PEASANTS *return. They carry the* COUNTESS CATHLEEN *and lay her upon the ground before* OONA *and* ALEEL. *She lies there as if dead.*)

OONA

O, that so many pitchers of rough clay
Should prosper and the porcelain break in two!

(*She kisses the hands of* CATHLEEN.)

A PEASANT

We were under the tree where the path turns,
When she grew pale as death and fainted away.
And while we bore her hither cloudy gusts
Blackened the world and shook us on our feet;
Draw the great bolt, for no man has beheld
So black, bitter, blinding, and sudden a storm.

(*One who is near the door draws the bolt.*)

CATHLEEN

O, hold me, and hold me tightly, for the storm
Is dragging me away.

(OONA *takes her in her arms.* *A* WOMAN *begins to wail.*)

PEASANT

Hush!

PEASANTS

Hush!

PEASANT WOMEN

Hush!

OTHER PEASANT WOMEN

Hush!

CATHLEEN (*half rising*)

Lay all the bags of money in a heap,
And when I am gone, old Oona, share them out
To every man and woman: judge, and give
According to their needs.

A PEASANT WOMAN

And she will give
Enough to keep my children through the dearth?

ANOTHER PEASANT WOMAN

O, Queen of Heaven, and all you blessed saints,
Let us and ours be lost so she be shriven.

CATHLEEN

Bend down your faces, Oona and Aleel;
I gaze upon them as the swallow gazes
Upon the nest under the eave, before
She wander the loud waters. Do not weep

Too great a while, for there is many a candle
On the High Altar though one fall. Aleel,
Who sang about the dancers of the woods,
That know not the hard burden of the world,
Having but breath in their kind bodies, farewell!
And farewell, Oona, you who played with me,
And bore me in your arms about the house
When I was but a child and therefore happy,
Therefore happy, even like those that dance.
The storm is in my hair and I must go.

(*She dies.*)

OONA

Bring me the looking-glass.

(A WOMAN *brings it to her out of the inner room,* OONA *holds it over the lips of* CATHLEEN. *All is silent for a moment. And then she speaks in a half scream:*)

O, she is dead!

A PEASANT

She was the great white lily of the world.

A PEASANT

She was more beautiful than the pale stars.

AN OLD PEASANT WOMAN

The little plant I love is broken in two.

(ALEEL *takes looking-glass from* OONA *and flings it upon the floor so that it is broken in many pieces.*)

ALEEL

I shatter you in fragments, for the face
That brimmed you up with beauty is no more:
And die, dull heart, for she whose mournful words
Made you a living spirit has passed away
And left you but a ball of passionate dust.
And you, proud earth and plumy sea, fade out!
For you may hear no more her faltering feet,
But are left lonely amid the clamorous war
Of angels upon devils.

(*He stands up; almost every one is kneeling, but it has grown so dark that only confused forms can be seen.*)

And I who weep
Call curses on you, Time and Fate and Change,
And have no excellent hope but the great hour

When you shall plunge headlong through bottomless space.

(*A flash of lightning followed immediately by thunder.*)

A Peasant Woman

Pull him upon his knees before his curses
Have plucked thunder and lightning on our heads.

Aleel

Angels and devils clash in the middle air,
And brazen swords clang upon brazen helms.

(*A flash of lightning followed immediately by thunder.*)

Yonder a bright spear, cast out of a sling,
Has torn through Balor's eye, and the dark clans
Fly screaming as they fled Moytura of old.

(*Everything is lost in darkness.*)

An Old Man

The Almighty wrath at our great weakness and sin
Has blotted out the world and we must die.

(*The darkness is broken by a visionary light. The* Peasants *seem to be kneeling upon the rocky*

*slope of a mountain, and vapour full of storm and ever-changing light is sweeping above them and behind them. Half in the light, half in the shadow, stand armed angels. Their armour is old and worn, and their drawn swords dim and dinted. They stand as if upon the air in formation of battle and look downward with stern faces. The* PEASANTS *cast themselves on the ground.*)

ALEEL

Look no more on the half-closed gates of Hell,
But speak to me, whose mind is smitten of God,
That it may be no more with mortal things,
And tell of her who lies there.

(*He seizes one of the angels.*

Till you speak
You shall not drift into eternity.

THE ANGEL

The light beats down; the gates of pearl are wide
And she is passing to the floor of peace,
And Mary of the seven times wounded heart
Has kissed her lips, and the long blessed hair
Has fallen on her face; The Light of Lights

Looks always on the motive, not the deed,
The Shadow of Shadows on the deed alone.

(ALEEL *releases the* ANGEL *and kneels.*)

OONA

Tell them who walk upon the floor of peace
That I would die and go to her I love;
The years like great black oxen tread the world,
And God the herdsman goads them on behind
And I am broken by their passing feet.

(*A sound of far-off horns seems to come from the heart of the Light. The vision melts away, and the forms of the kneeling* PEASANTS *appear faintly in the darkness.*)

# NOTES

# NOTES

I FOUND the story of the Countess Cathleen in what professed to be a collection of Irish folk-lore in an Irish newspaper some years ago. I wrote to the compiler, asking about its source, but got no answer, but have since heard that it was translated from *Les Matinées de Timothè Trimm* a good many years ago, and has been drifting about the Irish press ever since. Léo Lespès gives it as an Irish story, and though the editor of *Folklore* has kindly advertised for information, the only Christian variant I know of is a Donegal tale, given by Mr. Larminie in his *West Irish Folk Tales and Romances*, of a woman who goes to hell for ten years to save her husband, and stays there another ten, having been granted permission to carry away as many souls as could cling to her skirt. Léo Lespès may have added a few details, but I have no doubt of the essential antiquity of what seems to me the most impressive form of one of the supreme parables of the world. The parable came to the Greeks in the sacrifice of Alcestis, but her sacrifice was less overwhelming, less apparently irremediable. Léo Lespès tells the story as follows :—

Ce que je vais vous dire est un récit du carême Irlandais. Le boiteux, l'aveugle, le paralytique des rues de Dublin ou de Limerick, vous le diraient mieux que moi, cher lecteur, si vous alliez le leur demander, un sixpense d'argent à la main.— Il n'est pas une jeune fille catholique à laquelle on ne l'ait appris pendant les jours de préparation à la communion

sainte, pas un berger des bords de la Blackwater qui ne le puisse redire à la veillée.

Il y a bien longtemps qu'il apparut tout-à-coup dans la vielle Irlande deux marchands inconnus dont personne n'avait ouï parler, et qui parlaient néanmoins avec la plus grande perfection la langue du pays. Leurs cheveux étaient noirs et ferrés avec de l'or et leurs robes d'une grande magnificence.

Tous deux semblaient avoir le même âge ; ils paraissaient être des hommes de cinquante ans, car leur barbe grisonnait un peu.

Or, à cette époque, comme aujourd'hui, l'Irlande était pauvre, car le soleil avait été rare, et des récoltes presque nulles. Les indigents ne savaient à quel sainte se vouer, et la misère devenait de plus en plus terrible.

Dans l'hôtellerie où descendirent les marchands fastueux on chercha à pénétrer leurs desseins : mais ce fut en vain, ils demeurèrent silencieux et discrets.

Et pendant qu'ils demeurèrent dans l'hôtellerie, ils ne cessèrent de compter et de recompter des sacs de pièces d'or, dont la vive clarté s'apercevait à travers les vitres du logis.

Gentlemen, leur dit l'hôtesse un jour, d'où vient que vous êtes si opulents, et que, venus pour secourir la misère publique, vous ne fassiez pas de bonnes œuvres ?

—Belle hôtesse, répondit l'un d'eux, nous n'avons pas voulu aller au-devant d'infortunes honorables, dans la crainte d'êtr trompés par des misères fictives : que la douleur frappe à la porte, nous ouvrirons.

Le lendemain, quand on sut qu'il existait deux opulents étrangers prêts à prodiguer l'or, la foule assiégea leur logis ; mais les figures des gens qui en sortaient étaient bien diverses. Les uns avaient la fierté dans le regard, les autres portaient la honte au front. Les deux trafiquants achetaient des âmes pour le démon. L'âme d'un vieillard valait vingt pièces d'or, pas un penny de plus ; car Satan avait eu le temps d'y former hypothèque. L'âme d'une épose en valait cinquante

quand elle était jolie, ou cent quand elle était laide. L'âme d'une jeune fille se payait des prix fous : les fleurs les plus belles et les plus pures sont les plus chères.

Pendant ce temps, il existait dans la ville un ange de beauté, la comtesse Ketty O'Connor. Elle était l'idole du peuple, et la providence des indigents. Dès qu'elle eut appris que des mécréants profitaient de la misère publique pour dérober des cœurs à Dieu, elle fit appeler son majordome.

— Master Patrick, lui dit elle, combien ai-je de pièces d'or dans mon coffre ?

— Cent mille.

— Combien de bijoux ?

— Peur autant d'argent.

— Combien de châteux, de bois et de terres ?

— Pour le double de ces sommes.

— Eh bien ! Patrick, vendez tout ce qui n'est pas or et apportez-m'en le montant. Je ne veux garder à moi que ce castel et le champ qui l'entoure.

Deux jours après, les ordres de la pieuse Ketty étaient exécutés et le trésor était distribué aux pauvres au fur et à mesure de leurs besoins.

Ceci ne faisait pas le compte, dit la tradition, des commis-voyageurs de malin esprit, qui ne trouvaient plus d'âmes à acheter.

Aidés par un valet infâme, ils pénétrèrent dans la retraite de la noble dame et lui dérobèrent le restes de son trésor . . . en vain lutta-t-elle de toutes ses forces pour sauver le contenu de son coffre, les larrons diaboliques furent les plus forts. Si Ketty avait eu les moyens de faire un signe de croix, ajoute la légende Irlandaise, elle les eût mis en fuite, mais ses mains étaient captives—Le larcin fut effectué. Alors les pauvres sollicitèrent en vain près de Ketty dépouillée, elle ne pouvait plus secourir leur misère ;—elle les abandonnait à la tentation. Pourtant il n'y avait plus que huit jours à passer pour que les grains et les fourrages arrivassent en abondance des pays

d'Orient. Mais, huit jours, c'était un siècle : huit jours nécessitaient une somme immense pour subvenir aux exigences de la disette, et les pauvres allaient ou expirer dans les angousses de la faim, ou, reniant les saintes maximes de l'Evangile, vendre à vil prix leur âme, le plus beau présent de la munificence du Seigneur toutpuissant.

Et Ketty n'avait plus une obole, car elle avait abandonné son châteux aux malheureux.

Elle passa douze heures dans les larmes et le deuil, arrachant ses cheveux couleur de soleil et meurtrissant son sein couleur du lis : puis elle se leva résolue, animée par un vif sentiment de désespoir.

Elle se rendit chez les marchands d'âmes.

— Que voulez-vous ? dirent ils.

— Vous achetez des âmes ?

— Oui, un peu malgré vous, n'est ce pas, sainte aux yeux de saphir ?

— Aujourd'hui je viens vous proposer un marché, reprit elle.

— Lequel ?

— J'ai une âme a vendre ; mais elle eſt chère.

— Qu'importe si elle eſt précieuse ? l'âme, comme le diamant, s'apprécie à sa blancheur.

— C'eſt la mienne, dit Ketty.

Les deux envoyés de Satan tressaillirent. Leurs griffes s'allongerènt sous leurs gants de cuir ; leurs yeux gris étincelèrent :—l'âme, pure, immaculée, virginale de Ketty ! . . . c'était une acquisition inappréciable.

— Gentille dame, combien voulez-vous ?

— Cent cinquante mille écus d'or.

— C'eſt fait, dirent les marchands : et ils tendirent à Ketty un parchemin cacheté de noir, qu'elle signa en frissonnant.

La somme lui fut comptée.

Des qu'elle fut rentrée, elle dit au majordome:

— Tenez, distribuez ceci. Avec la somme que je vous donne les pauvres attendront la huitaine nécessaire et pas une de leurs âmes ne sera livrée au démon.

Puis elle s'enferma et recommanda qu'on ne vint pas la déranger.

Trois jours se passèrent ; elle n'appela pas ; elle ne sortit pas.

Quand on ouvrit sa porte, on la trouva raide et froide : elle était morte de douleur.

Mais la vente de cette âme si adorable dans sa charité fut déclarée nulle par le Seigneur : car elle avait sauvé ses concitoyens de la morte éternelle.

Après la huitaine, des vaisseaux nombreux amenèrent à l'Irlande affamée d'immenses provisions de grains.

La famine n'était plus possible. Quant aux marchands, ils disparurent de leur hôtellerie, sans qu'on sût jamais ce qu'ils étaient devenus.

Toutefois, les pêcheurs de la Blackwater prétendent qu'ils sont enchainés dans une prison souterraine par odre de Lucifer jusqu'au moment où ils pourront livrer l'âme de Ketty qui leur a échappé. Je vous dis la légende telle que je la sais.

— Mais les pauvres l'ont raconté d'âge en âge et les enfants de Cork et de Dublin chantent encore la ballade dont voici les derniers couplets :—

Pour sauver les pauvres qu'elle aime
Ketty donna
Son esprit, sa croyance même :
Satan paya
Cette âme au dévoûment sublime,
En écus d'or,
Disons pour racheter son crime,
*Confiteor.*

Mais l'ange qui se fit coupable
Par cherité
Au séjour d'amour ineffable
Est remonté.
Satan vaincu n'eut pas de prise
Sur ce cœur d'or ;
Chantons sous la nef de l'église,
*Confiteor.*

N'est ce pas que ce récit, né de l'imagination des poètes catholiques de la verte Erin, est une véritable récit de carême ?

*The Countess Cathleen* was acted in Dublin in 1899, with Mr. Marcus St. John and Mr. Trevor Lowe as the First and Second Demon, Mr. Valentine Grace as Shemus Rua, Master Charles Sefton as Teig, Madame San Carola as Mary, Miss Florence Farr as Aleel, Miss Anna Mather as Oona, Mr. Charles Holmes as the Herdsman, Mr. Jack Wilcox as the Gardener, Mr. Walford as a Peasant, Miss Dorothy Paget as a Spirit, Miss M. Kelly as a Peasant Woman, Mr. T. E. Wilkinson as a Servant, and Miss May Whitty as The Countess Kathleen. They had to face a very vehement opposition stirred up by a politician and a newspaper, the one accusing me in a pamphlet, the other in long articles day after day, of blasphemy because of the language of the demons or of Shemus Rua, and because I made a woman sell her soul and yet escape damnation, and of a lack of patriotism because I made Irish men and women, who, it seems, never did such a thing, sell theirs. The politician or the newspaper persuaded some forty Catholic students to sign a protest against the play, and a Cardinal, who avowed that he had not read it, to make another, and both politician and newspaper made such obvious appeals to the audience to break the peace, that a score or so of police were sent to the theatre to see that they did not. I had, however, no reason to regret the

result, for the stalls, containing almost all that was distinguished in Dublin, and a gallery of artisans alike insisted on the freedom of literature.

After the performance in 1899 I added the love scene between Aleel and the Countess, and in this new form the play was revived in New York by Miss Wycherley as well as being played a good deal in England and America by amateurs. Now at last I have made a complete revision to make it suitable for performance at the Abbey Theatre. The first two scenes are almost wholly new, and throughout the play I have added or left out such passages as a stage experience of some years showed me encumbered the action; the play in its first form having been written before I knew anything of the theatre I have left the old end, however, in the version printed in the body of this book, because the change for dramatic purposes has been made for no better reason than that audiences—even at the Abbey Theatre—are almost ignorant of Irish mythology —or because a shallow stage made the elaborate vision of armed angels upon a mountain-side impossible. The new end is particularly suited to the Abbey stage, where the stage platform can be brought out in front of the proscenium and have a flight of steps at one side up which the Angel comes, crossing towards the back of the stage at the opposite side. The principal lighting is from two arc lights in the balcony which throw their lights into the faces of the players, making footlights unnecessary. The room at Shemus Rua's house is suggested by a great grey curtain—a colour which becomes full of rich tints under the stream of light from the arcs. The two or more arches in the third scene permit the use of a gauze. The short front scene before the last is just long enough when played with incidental music to allow the scene set behind it to be changed. The play when played without interval in this way lasts a little over an hour.

The play was performed at the Abbey Theatre for the first time on December 14, 1911, Miss Maire O'Neill taking

the part of the Countess, and the last scene from the going out of the Merchants was as follows :—

(MERCHANTS *rush out.* ALEEL *crawls into the middle of the room; the twilight has fallen and gradually darkens as the scene goes on.*)

ALEEL

They're rising up—they're rising through the earth,
Fat Asmodel and giddy Belial,
And all the fiends. Now they leap in the air.
But why does Hell's gate creak so? Round and round.
Hither and thither, to and fro they'er running.

(*He moves about as though the air was full of spirits.* OONA *enters.*)

Crouch down, old heron, out of the blind storm.

OONA

Where is the Countess Cathleen? All this day
Her eyes were full of tears, and when for a moment
Her hand was laid upon my hand, it trembled.
And now I do not know where she is gone.

ALEEL

Cathleen has chosen other friends than us,
And they are rising through the hollow world.
Demons are out, old heron.

OONA

God guard her soul.

ALEEL

She's bartered it away this very hour,
As though we two were never in the world.

(*He kneels beside her, but does not seem to hear her words. The* PEASANTS *return. They carry the* COUNTESS CATHLEEN *and lay her upon the ground before* OONA *and* ALEEL. *She lies there as if dead.*)

OONA

O, that so many pitchers of rough clay
Should prosper and the porcelain break in two!
(*She kisses the hands of* CATHLEEN.)

A PEASANT

We were under the tree where the path turns
When she grew pale as death and fainted away.

CATHLEEN

O, hold me, and hold me tightly, for the storm
Is dragging me away.
(OONA *takes her in her arms.* A WOMAN *begins to wail.*)

PEASANTS

Hush!

PEASANTS

Hush!

PEASANT WOMEN

Hush!

OTHER PEASANT WOMEN

Hush!

KATHLEEN (*half rising*)

Lay all the bags of money in a heap,
And when I am gone, old Oona, share them out
To every man and woman: judge, and give
According to their needs.

A PEASANT WOMAN

And will she give
Enough to keep my children through the dearth?

ANOTHER PEASANT WOMAN

O, Queen of Heaven, and all you blessed saints,
Let us and ours be lost, so she be shriven.

CATHLEEN

Bend down your faces, Oona and Aleel;
I gaze upon them as the swallow gazes
Upon the nest under the eave, before
She wander the loud waters. Do not weep
Too great a while, for there is many a candle
On the High Altar though one fall. Aleel,
Who sang about the dancers of the woods,
That know not the hard burden of the world,
Having but breath in their kind bodies, farewell!
And farewell, Oona, you who played with me
And bore me in your arms about the house
When I was but a child—and therefore happy,
Therefore happy even like those that dance.
The storm is in my hair and I must go.

(*She dies.*)

OONA

Bring me the looking-glass.

(A WOMAN *brings it to her out of inner room.* OONA *holds glass over the lips of* CATHLEEN. *All is silent for a moment, then she speaks in a half-scream.*)

O, she is dead!

A PEASANT

She was the great white lily of the world.

AN OLD PEASANT WOMAN

The little plant I loved is broken in two.

(ALEEL *takes looking-glass from* OONA *and flings it upon floor, so that it is broken in many pieces.*)

ALEEL

I shatter you in fragments, for the face
That brimmed you up with beauty is no more;
And die, dull heart, for you that were a mirror
Are but a ball of passionate dust again!
And level earth and plumy sea, rise up!
And haughty sky, fall down!

A PEASANT WOMAN

Pull him upon his knees,
His curses will pluck lightning on our heads.

ALEEL

Angels and devils clash in the middle air,
And brazen swords clang upon brazen helms.
Look, look, a spear has gone through Belial's eye!

(*A winged* ANGEL, *carrying a torch and a sword, enters from the* R. *with eyes fixed upon some distant thing, The* ANGEL *is about to pass out to the* L. *when* ALEEL *speaks. The* ANGEL *stops a moment and turns.*)

Look no more on the half-closed gates of Hell,
But speak to me whose mind is smitten of God,
That it may be no more with mortal things:
And tell of her who lies there.

(*The* ANGEL *turns again and is about to go, but is seized by* ALEEL.)

Till you speak
You shall not drift into eternity.

THE ANGEL

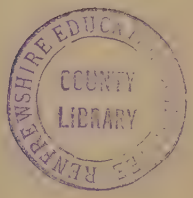
The light beats down; the gates of pearl are wide.
And she is passing to the floor of peace.
And Mary of the seven times wounded heart

Has kissed her lips, and the long blessed hair
Has fallen on her face; the Light of Lights
Looks always on the motive, not the deed,
The Shadow of Shadows on the deed alone.

(ALEEL *releases the* ANGEL *and kneels.*)

OONA

Tell them to walk upon the floor of peace,
That I would die and go to her I love;
The years like great black oxen tread the world,
And God the herdsman goads them on behind,
And I am broken by their passing feet.




*Printed and made in Great Britain by The Crypt House Press Limited, Gloucester and London*

# BENN'S ESSEX LIBRARY

*(Already published, continued from facing title).*

THE DRAMA OF THE LAW
*By* SIR EDWARD PARRY

AN OUTCAST OF THE ISLANDS
*By* JOSEPH CONRAD

MR. TEDDY
*By* E. F. BENSON

THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE AND THE COUNTESS CATHLEEN
*By* W. B. YEATS

*(To appear 2 at a time at intervals of one month).*

SISTER TERESA
*By* GEORGE MOORE

SONGS OF A SOURDOUGH
*By* ROBERT W. SERVICE

TRISTAN IN BRITTANY
*Translated by* DOROTHY L. SAYERS, M.A.
*With an Introduction by* GEORGE SAINTSBURY

THE STORY OF AN AFRICAN FARM
*By* OLIVE SCHREINER

*Other titles will be announced from time to time.*

Ernest Benn Limited, Bouverie House, Fleet Street, E.C. 4

UNIFORM WITH BENN'S ESSEX LIBRARY

*The Works of H. G. Wells. Cloth 3s.6d. net*

THE HISTORY OF MR. POLLY
KIPPS
THE NEW MACHIAVELLI
THE INVISIBLE MAN
THE FOOD OF THE GODS
THE STOLEN BACILLUS AND OTHER INCIDENTS
TONO BUNGAY
THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON
LOVE AND MR. LEWISHAM
THE SLEEPER AWAKES
TWELVE STORIES AND A DREAM
IN THE DAYS OF THE COMET
THE WAR OF THE WORLDS
THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU
THE PLATTNER STORY AND OTHERS
THE TIME MACHINE AND OTHER STORIES
TALES OF SPACE AND TIME
ANN VERONICA
MARRIAGE
THE PASSIONATE FRIENDS
THE SEA LADY
BEALBY
THE WORLD SET FREE
THE RESEARCH MAGNIFICENT

Ernest Benn Limited, Bouverie House, Fleet Street, E.C.4

No. Years RESERVE Form C.L.–D.

Renfrewshire County Library.

*The entries on this label must not be in any way interfered with.*
*The Book should be returned on or before the latest date entered below.*

17 OCT
– 1 JUL
29 MAR

Years 2: P
Land of Hearts
Desire.

**This Book will go to other Readers. Please Keep it Clean.**

KR-034-686